

Town of Milton

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TOWN MANAGER REPORT FEBRUARY 2012

Thank goodness Punxsutawney Phil was wrong this year! The furry little prognosticator called for six more weeks of winter earlier this month. Instead, Milton and the eastern seaboard have enjoyed mild temperatures throughout the season. Robins have arrived and daffodils are on the cusp of an early Spring bloom. We'll soon see the peak of the annual perch run and, not long after that, the Spring Town Wide Yard Sale (May 5th) will light up the town!



Garden Club Invests in the Town

A big "thank you" to the Milton Garden Club for making a huge investment in the beautification of our parks and walkways. Under the leadership of Jennifer Bringle, the Garden Club has committed to installing nearly \$10,000 of irrigation equipment by the clock tower, Governor's Walk, the park gazebo and the train station. Installation will likely be under way by the time that you read this.

If you see a member of the club at work in the flower beds, please be sure to thank them for their volunteer service and valuable donations. They keep our town attractive and help to keep your taxes low.

St. Patrick's Day Parade

Mark your calendars for the big parade on Sunday, March 11 (not March 17th)! Sponsored by Irish Eyes Restaurant for the benefit of the Milton Fire Department Training Program, Best Buddies Delaware and Casa Francisco, the parade begins at 2pm. It will proceed down Union Street from Atlantic Avenue, through the Historic District and the up the hill on Federal Street. Those interested in being a sponsor can contact Irish Eyes Restaurant at (302) 684-8889.

An Insert with Your Property Tax Bill

Many calls have come into Town Hall in response to the Property Tax mailing that included an insert regarding property rental. This statement, or affidavit, was sent to all owners of record in the town. The Town of Milton has long required a business license in order to rent your home. The cost (\$100) is relatively little. It helps to pay for our Code Enforcement efforts – which keeps the town attractive and ensures the safety of those who rent homes.

Most of the property owners that rent know about the requirement. There may be a few who do not. The affidavit is a way for the town to have a record that *every property owner* is aware and has indicated the status of the occupancy of their house. Please complete the form and return it to Town Hall. Your cooperation is appreciated. It will help us to be certain that all property owners that rent are treated equally.

Assessed Values vs. Appraised Values

Every property in Sussex County and the Town of Milton is assessed for the purposes of taxation. The assessed value will differ from the appraised value because market conditions are reflected in the appraised value. Assessments occur far less frequently than sales of comparable homes, so the difference becomes greater over time. The Town of Milton had its last assessment in 2009. The next one is scheduled for 2019. Sussex County, on the other hand, has not had a re-assessment since 1974.

So, the County's assessed value will be far lower than the market value of your home. The town's assessed value will most likely be slightly higher than the market value. What is important is that every home was measured by the same standard. For homes built after the 2009 assessment was done, the purchase price may be lower than the assessed value. This is because the values assigned to property and homes in 2009 must be applied – so every property owner is measured by the same standard. This practice ensures fairness in taxation for all.

The list of all assessed values in the Town of Milton can be found in the lobby of Town Hall. Our Charter details assessments and property tax appeal procedures. Several property owners filed a written appeal and made their case at our meeting on January 24th. Their tax payment amount is currently being studied by our assessor. All others, though, are obligated for the amount shown on your bill. Filing an appeal for the 2013 property tax bill can be done in December of this year.

Water Meter Upgrades

Most homes and businesses in town received a modern, accurate water meter a few years ago. These meters were installed at no charge and enable the Water Department to read values from a distance via a radio signal. There are ninety-four customers that, for various reasons, did not get a modern meter installed.

A bench test of new versus old meters has confirmed that the old meters “miss” approximately 11% of the use at normal flow rates. Far more is missed at a very low flow rate – such as a toilet flush.

To be sure that all customers of the Town of Milton Water System pay their fair share for the use of water, customers using the old meters will be offered a free installation of a new meter. Those who do not respond or who will not allow the installation in their home or on their property will have a meter pit installed at a significant expense. The pit will be installed in the right-of-way along the street curb. This step, and other measures, is necessary steps to ensure not only fairness but also the town's compliance with state and regional resource management authorities.

Street Sweeper Added to Town Equipment

Thanks go out to the Milton Police Department for their savvy Internet shopping skills! There are great bargains to be found through military surplus equipment “auctions”. A street sweeper was obtained at no more expense than the value of the time it took to travel to the storage place and back. The used unit performed well in a test downtown – but could use a tune-up in the shop. It's value approaches \$30,000. That's a great find and will help us to maintain a great appearance in our highly visible parts of town.

2012 Summer Concert Series

The Milton Town Park will once again host a series of concerts throughout the Summer this year. With help from former Councilman Charlie Fleetwood, sponsors are being contacted and bands are being booked. If you know a business that would like to have the great advertising that comes with sponsoring (or co-sponsoring) one of our concerts, please contact the Town Hall at (302) 684-4110. We'll put you in touch with Charlie and everyone will enjoy picnics with music and dancing on those warm Summer nights in the park.